

PROCEEDINGS OF THE HISTORIC CONSERVATION BOARD

MONDAY, AUGUST 20, 2007

3:00 P.M., J. MARTIN GRIESEL ROOM, CENTENNIAL PLAZA II

The Historic Conservation Board met at 3:00 P.M., in the J. Martin Griesel Room, Centennial Plaza II, with members Spraul-Schmidt, Young, Fisher, Wallace, Raser, Senhauser, Kreider and Chatterjee present.

MINUTES

The Board unanimously approved the minutes of Monday, August 6, 2007 meeting (motion by Spraul-Schmidt, second by Raser).

[Mr. Senhauser and Mr. Chatterjee joined the meeting.]

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS, 2702 CLEINVIEW AVENUE, CLEINVIEW-HACKBERRY HISTORIC DISTRICT

Staff member Adrienne Cowden presented a report on a proposal to remove a modern non-contributing deck in the rear of 2702 Cleinview Avenue and replace it with a new screened porch at the rear of the building. An existing side porch and stair connected to the new screened porch would be rebuilt. Ms. Cowden reminded the Board that it had previously tabled this application to give the owner time to resolve inconsistencies and deficiencies in the original plan. Ms. Cowden recommended that the Board approve the revised and corrected plans with the condition that the porch be painted or stained.

Mr. Young recalled that at the earlier hearing, the Board had suggested that the columns extend the full height of the screened porch and the areas below openings be paneled. Ms. Cowden reminded the Board that it had accepted clapboards with corner boards as an alternative and the applicant agreed to that modification. The Board commented that the revised drawings were very helpful and made it easier for the Board to move forward on the project.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Spraul-Schmidt, second by Wallace) to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed porch with the following conditions:

1. The porch shall be painted or stained.
2. Final plans and specifications shall be submitted to the Urban Conservator for review and approval prior to construction.

ZONING VARIANCE AND A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS, 1636 CHASE STREET, NORTHSIDE NBD HISTORIC DISTRICT

Staff member Caroline Kellam presented a report for the rehabilitation of the Hannaford Firehouse at 1636 Chase Street. She reported that the building had been most recently used as a small business photo studio/lab; its only employee lived on the upper floors. Ms. Kellam explained that OMS had purchased the building and plans to reuse the entire building for commercial lab work. The larger operation would require additional parking spaces that could not be accommodated on-site, so would require a zoning variance. OMS had reserved ten parking spaces (for its eleven employees) from Save-A-Lot, a parking lot within walking distance of the business.

Proposed exterior work included a new metal egress stair and window-to-door conversions on the rear of the building and the redesign of a window into a compatible new entrance on the side façade facing 12th Street. New HVAC compressor units would be installed on the roof and at the rear and would be not visible from the street. The two proposed banner signs met the zoning requirements.

Ms Kellam reported that a pre-hearing was held on Thursday August 9, 2007, with only the applicant present. No response was received from the Northside Council or Business Association. She recommended that the Board approve the zoning variance for off-street parking and a Certificate of Appropriateness for the plans dated 7/26/07 as submitted.

BOARD ACTION:

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Raser, second by Spraul-Schmidt) to take the following action:

1. Approve a variance from Section 1425-03 Requirements for Off-Street Parking and Loading allowing for no off-street parking for the OMS business at 1636 Chase Street finding that such relief from the literal implication of the Zoning Code is necessary and appropriate in the interest of historic conservation so as not to adversely affect the historic architectural or aesthetic integrity of the district; and would not be materially detrimental to the public health, safety, and welfare or injurious to the property in the district or vicinity where the property is located.
2. Approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the rehabilitation of the building at 1636 Chase Avenue as per the proposed plans dated 7/26/07.

**CONDITIONAL USE, ZONING VARIANCE AND CERTIFICATE OF
APPROPRIATENESS, 1521 VINE STREET, OVER-THE –RHINE HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Ms. Kellam presented a staff report and circulated additional photos and drawings of a proposed public parking lot at 1521 Vines Street. She explained that the lot had remained vacant since the Empire Theater was removed from this site several years ago. The City would develop the site as monthly rentals for 18 vehicles. Spaces would serve the adjacent Crossroads Health Center and local merchants and residents. Ms. Kellam said that the applicant was seeking relief from the Zoning Code, which required a three-foot landscape buffer on all sides. Conditional use approval would also be required for any public parking lot within the CC-P Zoning District.

Ms. Kellam explained that the lot would be between two existing buildings facing on Vine Street and would extend through to Parvis Alley. The double-loaded lot would be paved with asphalt and secured with a metal fence and sliding gate on Vine Street; additional fencing runs along Parvis Alley and the rear portion of north property line. A planting bed with two trees is provided on Vine Street. Ms. Kellam suggested that the two yellow bollards protecting the entry be painted black.

Ms. Kellam reported that only the applicant appeared at the pre-hearing meeting; no comments were received from the community. She recommended approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness and the required zoning variances and conditional use.

Mr. Kreider questioned the need for a conditional use in this circumstance. Mr. Forwood explained that if the parking lot were tied by covenant a specific user(s), no conditional use would be required, but this would be a public lot serving area businesses on a monthly rental.

The Board expressed concern that the site not be set aside permanently for parking and hoped that it might one day be available for an in-fill building. Ed Ratterman, project manager for the Department of Community Development & Planning, indicated that the City anticipated that the site might be built upon in the future. He explained that the City would retain ownership of the property and enter into a long-term lease agreement with an entity to manage and maintain the lot. He expected that such an agreement would be for a three to five year term which the City may chose not to renew if pursuing a development agreement for the site.

In response to Mr. Raser, Mr. Ratterman said the wall-mounted light fixtures would be screened from adjacent residences. He also clarified that the gate area had been designed to the minimum width required for two-way traffic and to provide sufficient space off Vine Street for users to activate their remote controls.

Julie Fay, Vine Street Business Association, commented that there was a need for parking in that area and its location was consistent with the Over-the-Rhine Comprehensive Plan. She favored a 24-hour parking lot that would provide residential parking during evenings and on the weekends. Ms. Fay objected to the mechanical gate and suggested it be scaled back and the number of spaces reduced to 16 in order to provide more extensive landscaping along Vine Street and Parvis Alley.

Debbie Mays, OTR Community Council, spoke in favor of the parking lot, but agreed the number of spaces should be reduced to increase the landscaping on all sides. Ms. Spraul-Schmidt suggested that ivy on the Parvis Alley fence would screen the site without taking up much ground area. Ms. Mays also stated that large vehicles should be excluded from the lot. Mr. Ratterman responded that vehicle size and number could be controlled during rental, but that eighteen spaces were necessary to make the project economically viable.

Mr. Forwood suggested that the Board consider granting a variance for the minimum width (8.5 feet) and area (160 square feet) of a parking space under the zoning code. That would give the City some flexibility to narrow individual spaces to recapture additional landscape area along Parvis Alley, to provide for handicap parking or provide a compact or motorcycle space or two.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Chatterjee, second by Spraul-Schmidt) to take the following action:

1. Approve a conditional use from Section 1409-07 Land Use regulations allowing a surface parking lot and grant a variance from Chapter 1425-29 Parking Lot Landscaping to allow the parking lot two small landscape beds and not perimeter landscape area of a least three feet in width around the entire lot finding that such relief from the literal implication of the Zoning Code is necessary and appropriate in the interest of historic conservation so as not to adversely affect the historic architectural or aesthetic integrity of the district; and would not be materially detrimental to the public health, safety, and welfare or injurious to the property in the district or vicinity where the property is located.
2. Approve a variance to section 1425-25A sizes, to allow parking spaces narrower than 8.5 feet with a total area of less than 160 square feet.
3. Approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the construction of the parking lot allowing parking space to be less than 8.5 feet with the following conditions
 - a) Paint the steel bollards black to match the fence rather than construction yellow.
 - b) Any revisions and finals be reviewed and approved by the Urban Conservator prior to issuing a Certificate of Appropriateness and a building permit.

PRELIMINARY DESIGN REVIEW, 1232 VINE STREET, OVER-THE-RHINE HISTORIC DISTRICT

[Mr. Raser recused himself from this item.]

Ms. Cowden presented a staff report on a proposal to rehabilitate 1232 Vine into nine residential condominium units over first floor retail space. She explained that much of the exterior work was

undertaken in 2002 as part of the Vine Street Façade Program. This included masonry restoration, cornice repair, replacement windows, painting and basic storefront rehabilitation.

Ms. Cowden used a model and drawings to describe the new work, focusing on the north and south elevations. A dormer would be added on the north elevation to make the attic level habitable and adjacent to it, a deck would be cut into the existing roof; a sight diagram showed the two to be out of view from the street.

The most substantial changes occurred on the south elevation facing a surface parking lot. A new elevator tower and entry would be constructed of concrete block. Individual unit decks would span diagonally from the existing building to the outside edge of the tower at each floor level, on both sides. Large two-story windows would be cut into what is now essentially a windowless brick wall.

Project architect Mark Gunther was present to answer questions from the Board. He emphasized that views of the city skyline, outdoor space, elevator access and secure parking were of prime importance in marketing this project; these had dictated the changes to the south elevation.

Mr. Chatterjee said that the new elevator tower and decks appeared as add-ons unrelated to the architectural forms of the existing building. Mr. Gunther responded that he wanted to create visual excitement on that wall in order to capitalize on the momentum in the neighborhood. Ms. Wallace observed that based on recent projects reviewed by the Board, decks on minor elevations were evolving as a new way of socializing.

In answer to Mr. Chatterjee, Mr. Gunther confirmed that his client also owned the abutting parking lot (in separate name) as well as the condominium project to its south. He said the lot served other residences in the neighborhood. Mr. Gunther added that the lot was large enough to do infill at some point in the future since the elevator tower extended only approximately 12-feet into the parking lot and a clean rectangle remained. He said he would not want to water down the new design elements just to facilitate later infill.

Mr. Senhauser said that from a market standpoint he understood why the openings were cut on the south side of the building, but the changes severely limited the potential for developing the parking lot with a new building. He pointed out that any new construction to the south would essentially eliminate the view from the south-facing units and their balconies. Mr. Gunther responded that buyers recognized this as a possibility and that it had not stopped sales at the Excelsior Lofts. He added that a courtyard separating the 1232 Vine and a new building next door would preserve some open space if not the view.

Mr. Senhauser supported the notion of creating a courtyard against the south wall of the building. He said historically buildings along Vine Street were separated by such open space and offered a connecting reference to the street and reinforced the street face. Mr. Senhauser suggested that the elevator tower entry be reoriented to Vine Street, not the parking lot. He said that with minor design changes, the groundwork could be formed to create a meaningful open space that would connect naturally to a new building to the south and incorporate the balconies and large windows proposed for this project.

Mr. Young commented that the whole south side of the building appeared new; in that context, the larger windows and two story openings were not objectionable. He did suggest that the elevator tower should be sheathed in brick to match the existing building. There was general agreement that the deck rails should be more simply-detailed.

Mr. Senhauser said that he understood the necessity of capturing attic space with the north side dormer and deck cut, but that the proposed treatment was awkward. He said the two should relate

better to one another and to the façade below. Mr. Gunther responded that each was largely out of view from the street.

BOARD ACTION

No official Board action was required at this time.

[Mr. Raser left the meeting.]

SUBJECT: PRELIMINARY DESIGN REVIEW, VINE STREET AT 14TH & MERCER STREETS, OVER-THE-RHINE HISTORIC DISTRICT

Ms. Cowden presented staff reports on a proposal by Model Group to develop several buildings and parcels near the intersection of Vine and Mercer Streets. This included rehabilitating 1332-1342 Vine Street, demolishing structures on the rear of these lots and constructing a L-shaped addition that would extend into 1326-1330 Vine, on the east side of Vine Street at Mercer. On the west side of Vine Street opposite, 1331-1335 Vine would be demolished for a new building and to its west, two floors would be added to 1332 Republic.

Ms. Cowden indicated that the buildings at 1332-1342 Vine were contributing to the Over-the-Rhine district; those at the rear of the lots (facing Boots Alley) were slated for demolition. The applicant would need to provide additional documentation to justify his assertion that the buildings could not be reasonably saved. 1326-1330 Vine is a non-contributing structure and 1332 Republic is a single-story garage that is of the period of significance, but of minimal architectural interest.

Referring to plans and renderings of the three groups, Ms Cowden pointed out materials, details and treatments common to the new construction. Each would be constructed primarily of brick with a variety of surface materials to give texture and interest to the facades. Massing, scale and materials, would reflect the surrounding buildings with first commercial space facing Vine Street and garages on the secondary streets. Ms. Cowden indicated that the Department of Buildings & Inspections had not yet reviewed the proposal, but it was likely that the project would require multiple building variances for setbacks and transparency.

Project architect Jeff Raser of Glaserworks and developer Rob Bennet of Model Group were present to discuss the projects in greater detail. Mr. Raser acknowledged that this would be a difficult project to market, but had confidence that the successes at 12th Street would spur development a few blocks north. He stressed the importance of providing secure parking and useable outdoor living space.

Mr. Raser said the project would preserve the historic character and vitality of the three-story buildings 1332-1342 Vine, but those in the rear would have to be sacrificed for parking. The new addition at Vine and Mercer would re-establish the corner and strengthen the streetscape. Mr. Raser said the new construction would have strong bases and cornices and be sensitive in massing, portion, rhythm and scale to OTR buildings, yet contemporary in materials and detail. He cited the metal cornice, lintels and sills as modern equivalents of stone details. The historic pattern of transparent commercial first floors is continued with storefronts framed with granite pilasters and glazed garage doors. Perforated steel cornices meet at a corner tower on 1331-1335 Vine leading to a common roof deck. Curving balconies frame a projecting bay to create an oriel window. Two stories would be added to 1332 Republic to create two residences over parking within the existing brick base. Exterior walls of EFIS are punctuated with simple window openings on this modest building.

Mr. Senhauser recognized the complexity of the project, but wondered whether the limited budget would support the level of materials and details shown. He suggested that the some non-critical elements, though interesting, may have to be edited out. Mr. Senhauser said he was not fond of the corner tower on 1331-1335 Vine and that the corner would be stronger if wrapped by the cornice. He stated that the effort on 1332 Republic was a bit self-conscious and might be simplified to form a backdrop for its neighbor facing Vine.

There was general agreement said the two buildings at Vine and 14th Streets held together, yet read individually, but that the Mercer Street buildings read as a single, monolithic unit. Mr. Senhauser indicated the Mercer Street façade was somewhat confusing, elements butting in places and overlapping in others. He suggested treating the composition as two (though not identical) parts focused on a third bay formed by the central stair. Mr. Chatterjee agreed and reiterated that simplification would help.

[Mr. Chatterjee left the meeting.]

Discussion returned to the west side of Vine Street. Mr. Senhauser pointing out that although recessed balconies offered a more comfortable deck, they presented design challenges. Likewise, the more contemporary treatment of the open corner tower on 1331-1335 Vine could separate rather than unify the facades.

[Ms. Fisher left the meeting.]

Mr. Senhauser said he favored the simple west elevation of the 1332 Republic over the 14th Street façade because its upper floors presented a better balance of solids and voids than the 14th Street façade. Mr. Bennet commented that the openings on the upper floors of 14th Street were aligned with those in the existing one-story garage on which it was being built.

Ms. Spraul-Schmidt questioned the demolition of the brick buildings facing Boots Alley. Ms. Cowden responded that the one-story additions were of the period but did not appear to be original, and that their structural condition had not yet been fully documented. Mr. Raser stated that the buildings were too expensive to rehab and were in an advanced state of deterioration.

Julie Fay commented that the OTR Community Council was particularly sensitive to the demolition of historic buildings and hoped that none would be removed until financing was in place and construction was approved for their replacements. She invited Mr. Raser to a Community Council meeting to discuss this project.

BOARD ACTION

No official Board action was required at this time.

ADJOURN

As there were no other items to be considered by the Board, the meeting was adjourned (motion by Wallace, second by Spraul-Schmidt).

William L. Forwood
Urban Conservator

John C. Senhauser, Chairman

Date: _____